(b) The actual procurement of wheat for the last two Rabi Marketing Seasons 2004-05 and 2005-06 is as under:—

	(in lakh MT)
2004-05	167.95
2005-06	147.85

Procurement of foodgrains depends on a number of factors viz. production, market prices of foodgrains, market arrivals, number of procurement centres and participation of private trade. A combination of these factors, may have resulted in lower procurement of wheat by the Government agencies this year.

(c) The following steps are being taken to check artificial increase in prices of wheat:

(i) Monitoring of wholesale and retail prides in all major centres of the country on a weekly basis;

(ii) Adequate issue of wheat under the TPDS and other welfare schemes.

(iii) Release of wheat under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

(iv) Ensuring adequate stocking of wheat in all the regions of the country.

Rice procurement by FCI in A.P.

1302. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of rice procured by the Food Corporation of India in Andhra Pradesh in the last six months;

(b) the further quantity expected to be procured by the FCI in the rest of this fiscal year in the State;

(c) the districts where the rice is being stored by the FCI;

(d) the storage charges paid by FCI in 2004-05 for the rice stored in private godowns in the State; and

(e) the steps proposed to reduce the expenses of storage?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) The quantity of rice, including paddy in terms of rice, procured by the Food Corporation of India in Andhra Pradesh in the last six months (February, 2005 to July, 2005) was 24.22 lakh tonnes.

(b) A further quantity of 75,000 tonnes of rice is expected to be procured in Andhra Pradesh by the FCI in the rest of Kharif Marketing Season which ends in September, 2005.

(c) FCI is storing rice in all the 23 Revenue Districts of Andhra Pradesh.

(d) The rent paid for private godowns for 2004-05 was Rs. 12.89 crore (provisional).

(e) The expenses on storage incurred is being reduced, by the Food Corporation of India, through dehiring of godowns not required, whenever feasible.

Consumer Welfare Fund

1303. SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to State:

(a) how much Consumer Welfare Fund was available as on 30th June, 2005 and its utilization during the last five years from 2000-01 to 2004-05;

(b) whether Government are planning to increase the ceiling on grant allocations to consumer organizations; and

(c) whether Government intend to simplify the operational procedures of Consumer Welfare Fund?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) As on 30th June, 2005 an amount of Rs. 68.89 crores has been credited to the Consumer Welfare Fund. The utilization of funds during the last five years is as under:

(Rs. in thousand)

Year	Funds Utilized during the year
2000-01	74,04